

More about Walter J. Ong's Thought and Donald Lazere's New Book

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University of Minnesota Duluth Library has published in [UMD d-Commons](https://dcommons.d.umn.edu/handle/10792/2978) my lengthy historical document titled “The Unexpurgated Text of ‘IQ, Orality, and Literacy,’” which includes certain introductory material I recently added. Here’s the URL:

<http://d-commons.d.umn.edu/handle/10792/2978>

My controversial 1983 IQ article is a shortened version of my much lengthier essay “IQ, Orality, and Literacy,” the unexpurgated text of which is now available at the UMD library’s digital commons.

I was prompted recently to make the unexpurgated text of my IQ essay available publicly by Donald Lazere’s discussion of my controversial 1983 IQ article in his deeply polemical new book *Political Literacy in Composition and Rhetoric: Defending Academic Discourse Against Postmodern Pluralism* (Southern Illinois UP, 2015).

Yogi Berra famously said, “It ain’t over ‘til it’s over.” Lazere’s commentary about my controversial 1983 IQ article shows that the controversy ain’t over for him. In my estimate, my work in that article is over his head, which he comes close to acknowledging in one sentence. But he seems to be incapable of resisting the urge to comment on my article and the controversy about it.

Because my article is over his head, it would be pointless to respond point by point to his commentary. Instead, I will explain where I am coming from in that article – then and now. It is not hard for me to explain the trajectory of my life over the last fifty years or so as a student of the American Jesuit cultural historian and theorist Walter J. Ong’s thought.

I have published a book-length study of Ong’s work (revised edition, 2016; orig. ed., 2000), co-edited and contributed to five volumes of Ong’s essays (1992a, 1992b, 1995, 1999, and 2002), and contributed to four collections of essays about Ong’s work (1987, 1991, 1998, and 2012), two of which I co-edited (1991 and 2012). In addition, I have published other journal articles and book chapters about Ong’s work.

But Lazere does not mention any of my publications after my controversial 1983 IQ article, not even my 1986 article replying to the critics of my 1983 article, and he mentions only two or three of my articles in the 1970s. So if we were to imagine an obituary writer using Lazere’s book to write up my obituary after I die, whenever that turns out to be, the obituary writer might say that I was most widely known for my controversial 1983 IQ article. Depending on the framework the imagined obituary writer used, the controversy over my 1983 IQ article might seem to be a tempest in a teapot.

After all, in the prestige culture in academia, composition and rhetoric is not considered to be very prestigious – compared, say, to literary studies, as Lazere knows. But is he going to enhance his own standing and prestige in academia by revisiting the controversy over my 1983 IQ article and other academic controversies involving literacy in recent decades in his deeply polemical new book?

Now, Ong's mature work, from the 1950s onward, challenges people to rise to a new plane of consciousness – the plane of consciousness that he himself rose to as the result of studying the work of the French existentialist philosopher Louis Lavelle (1883-1951), as I will explain momentarily.

But few academics have risen to that plane of consciousness challenge, as the heated controversy over my controversial 1983 IQ article shows. Lazere's new book shows that he is one academic who has not yet risen to the challenge of Ong's new plane of consciousness.

To illustrate the broad scope afforded by Ong's new plane of consciousness, I would call your attention to my book-length 12-category classified bibliography of selected works that can be related to Ong's thought that I have published, along with an introduction to Ong's philosophical thought, in UMD d-Commons:

<http://d.umn.edu/lib/d-commons/libpub/monographs/Ong-for-Everybody/>

I have also published my more recent essay "Understanding Ong's Philosophical Thought" in UMD d-Commons: <https://d-commons.d.umn.edu:8443/handle/10792/2696>

Now, Ong's massively researched book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Harvard UP, 1958) centers on the French logician and educational reformer and Protestant martyr Peter Ramus (1515-1572). For understandable reasons, Ong focuses on educational history in his broad discussion of Ramus' educational reforms.

In addition, Ong creatively works with the aural-visual contrast that he acknowledges (page 338, note 54) borrowing from Lavelle's 1942 book *La Parole et L'écriture*. Arguably Ong's 1958 book is his major contribution to phenomenological and personalist (existentialist) philosophical thought.

In the book *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge UP, 2004), Andrea Wilson Nightingale of Stanford University does not happen to advert to Lavelle's 1942 book or Ong's 1958 book. Nevertheless, her 2004 book supports and strengthens their contention about the visual orientation in classical Greek philosophic thought.

In effect, Nightingale's 2004 book also strengthens the contrast that the classicist Eric A. Havelock works with in his landmark book *Preface to Plato* (Belknap P/ Harvard UP, 1963). Ong never tired of referring to Havelock's 1963 book.

Now, James Collins in philosophy at St. Louis University (SLU) published a survey article about Lavelle's work, including his 1942 book *La Parole et L'écriture*: "Louis Lavelle on Human Participation" in the *Philosophical Review*, volume 56, number 2 (March 1947): pages 156-183.

Subsequently, Collins published one of the most perceptive reviews of Ong's 1958 books in the Jesuit-sponsored semi-popular magazine *AMERICA*, volume 101 (1959): pages 37-39.

But Ong's various references in his 1958 book to Descartes and Cartesian thought (the Art of Reason from Ong's subtitle) do not come across as exactly positive (see pages 7, 115, 121, 125, 198, 229, 230, 251, 301, 307, and 311).

However, elsewhere Lavelle himself takes a basically positive and constructive view of Descartes and Cartesian thought.

But Lavelle's 1942 book that so animated Ong's thinking in the 1950s has never been translated into English. Of Lavelle's many books, only three of his shorter books (1939, 1940, and 1951) have been translated into English – all three after he died in 1951 (his 1951 book, in 1954; his 1940 book, in 1963; and his 1939 book, in 1973).

In Ong's last book-length study, *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (U of Toronto P, 1986), the published version of Ong's 1981 Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto, Ong lists in his bibliography Lavelle's book *The Dilemma of Narcissus*, translated by William Gairdner (1973; orig. French ed. 1939).

But in no other book or essay does Ong mention Lavelle's other two books that were translated into English: *Evil and Suffering*, translated by Bernard Murchland (1963; orig. French ed., 1940) and *The Meaning of Holiness*, translated by Dorothea O'Sullivan (1954; orig. French ed., 1951; also translated into Spanish, German, and Italian).

Incidentally, in the introduction to his English translation of *The Dilemma of Narcissus*, William Gairdner tells a great story about Lavelle (page 20). After Lavelle had completed his graduate studies in philosophy, he was called up for military duty in World War I. However, in the course of the war, he was taken prisoner and consigned to a prisoner-of-war camp. But he was given a pen and a supply of paper. Without a book, he wrote both his doctoral dissertation and the required minor thesis in the prisoner-of-war camp. After the war ended, he was released. He then presented both his dissertation and thesis to the faculty at the University of Strasbourg – and had them published as *La Dialectique du Monde Sensible* and *Perception Visuelle de la Profondeur* respectively. No doubt Lavelle's minor thesis contributed immeasurably to his later working with the aural-visual contrast in his 1942 book *La Parole et L'écriture* that Ong borrowed and worked with in his 1958 book.

In light of Lavelle's extraordinary war experience, he surely deserves to be categorized as an existentialist philosopher. Talk about turning lemons into lemonade. Wow!

In ancient Greece, Aeschylus fought in war and lived to write numerous tragedies. He expressed the idea of learning through suffering. By definition, suffering is not fun to undergo. But it is hard to avoid altogether over a lifetime.

However, if the great trick in life is to learn from suffering, the possible educational value of suffering is not necessarily always automatic. After all, Aeschylus himself engaged in a certain kind of reflection on the past in the process of writing his tragedies for public performance in Athens. When his tragedies were performed in Athens, they evoked pity and fear in the live audience, according to Aristotle's *Poetics*. So was the public performance of tragedies in Athens the birth of participatory group therapy?

Of course Odysseus is portrayed in the *Odyssey* as engaging in a kind of public recitation about his own experiences of war, on his journey home after the Trojan War. In a safe and supportive public context, he expresses his own sense of loss and bereavement about the deaths of his men. So was the public performance of the *Odyssey* in ancient Greece in effect the birth of participatory group therapy?

As a result of the legal execution of Socrates during the experiment in democracy in Athens on trumped up charges, his student Plato suffered the loss of his admired teacher and friend. As a result of the bereavement process that Plato suffered, he, like Aeschylus, engaged in a certain kind of reflection about the past, which in effect gave birth to Western philosophic thought. The parable of the cave in Plato's *Republic* can be interpreted as a symbolic expression of Plato's own rise to the new plane of consciousness that Lavelle and Ong later experienced.

So was the parable of the cave the birth of Freudian and Jungian and Adlerian and other forms of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy – or was Odysseus' moving recitation about his experiences of war and the loss of his men?

So was small-group personal initiation into philosophical thought in the safe and supportive context of Plato's Academy the birth of participatory group therapy?

In ancient times, the study of philosophy was generally thought of as therapy for young adults. See Robert E. Cushman's book *Therapeia: Plato's Conception of Philosophy* (U of North Carolina P, 1958) and Martha C. Nussbaum's clever book *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton UP, 1994).

At times in the canonical Christian gospels, the character known as Jesus the Christ (the Messiah) is portrayed as speaking publicly to large crowds of people, as an ancient Greek or Roman orator might speak publicly to an assembly of people. However, if the historical Jesus, who evidently experienced a new plane of consciousness that he referred to as the inner kingdom of God, did at times speak publicly to large crowds, we probably should assume that he also at times spoke to small gatherings of his interested followers (the disciples), as Plato and Aristotle spoke to their students in small gatherings – in effect, tutorials. In general, public oratory does not usually lend itself to question-and-answer exchanges, or to the give-and-take that might help clarify what the teacher means

But we may wonder just how well the historical Jesus could communicate the subjective inner experience of the kingdom of God through his use of parables to his most interested disciples. After all, it is one thing to grasp the historical Jesus' excitement about his own inner experience, but quite a different thing to have such an inner experience oneself.

Nevertheless, just as the legal execution of Socrates in Athens on trumped-up charges evoked profound bereavement in Plato, so too the legal execution of the historical Jesus in Jerusalem on trumped up-charges evoked profound bereavement in his followers (disciples).

Moreover, just as Plato eventually articulated the parable of the cave, so too the followers of the historical Jesus eventually articulated the parable known as the Christ myth. In it the dead Jesus is portrayed symbolically as rising to a new plane of illuminated consciousness.

Furthermore, just as Odysseus is portrayed as engaging in the triumphalistic slaughter of the suitors, so too the resurrected Jesus is portrayed in the triumphalistic slaughter of the unrighteous in the end-time. In those two mythic representations, the slaughter imagery is graphic. If we were to interpret the Christ myth literally, then we would have to say that there are going to be a lot of dead at the end-time. However, interpreted symbolically, the Christ myth represents in the psychodynamics of psycho-spiritual growth and development – of saying goodbye to the old and rising to a new plane of consciousness.

See the biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan's accessible books *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus* (HarperOne, 2012) and *How to Read the Bible and Still Be a Christian: Struggling with Divine Violence from Genesis Through Revelation* (HarperOne, 2015). Also see the Indian Jesuit spiritual director Anthony de Mello's posthumously published book *The Way to Love: Meditations for Life* (Image, 2012).

Now, if it is true that Lavelle learned through suffering the set back of being taken as a prisoner of war, then he apparently expresses what he had learned as a result of that suffering in his perceptive book *Evil and Suffering*, and in the extraordinary first chapter of his most widely translated book *The Meaning of Holiness* (pages 1-27). His extraordinary description in that first chapter of the illumination of memory is consistent with the imagery of illumination in the parable of the cave, even though he does not explicitly mention it. He also does not mention St. Augustine's *Confessions* as exemplifying the illumination of memory.

In any event, Lavelle was prolific. By the customary standards of philosophy professors, Lavelle's three short books that were eventually translated into English would be classified as minor works, not major works. In his above-mentioned introduction, Gairdner identifies seven minor works Lavelle published, including one published posthumously in 1957 (page 22). Gairdner also says that after Bergson died in 1941, Lavelle was successor in the College de France (page 21). Lavelle himself died in 1951.

Because Lavelle was a Roman Catholic, he is categorized as a Christian existentialist. More technically, though, in terms of standard categories used in philosophy, Lavelle would be categorized as working out a philosophical ontology, so he would be categorized as an

ontologist. So the categorization of Lavelle as a Christian existentialist suggests in effect that we can categorize all philosophical ontologists as existentialists.

However that may be, there is nothing explicitly christocentric in Lavelle's three books that were translated into English, not even in his 1954 (orig. French ed., 1951) book about holiness in which he devotes a separate chapter to discussing four different Roman Catholic saints. But there is also nothing explicitly atheistic in those three books. Basically, Lavelle's philosophy of participation is theistic in a way that is not necessarily opposed to Christianity or to any other religious tradition.

However, for understandable reasons, Ong gravitated toward explicitly christocentric authors. For example, Ong supplied a very favorable preface for the English translation of Claude Tresmontant's book *CHRISTIAN METAPHYSICS*, translated by Gerard Slevin (Sheed & Ward, 1965, pages 7-11). Unlike Tresmontant, Lavelle as a philosopher does not begin with Christian revelation and then construct a metaphysics that fits Christian revelation. However, as I say, Lavelle's philosophy of participation is not necessarily opposed to the sense of participation that Tresmontant calls attention in his explication of Christian texts.

I should point out here that Tresmontant's exploratory project is not necessarily invalid. For example, David M. Smith in anthropology at UMD, an expert in Chipewyan oral-traditional stories, undertakes a similar exploratory project in his cutting-edge 1997 essay "World as Event: Aspects of Chipewyan Ontology," which is reprinted in the ambitious anthology *Of Ong and Media Ecology*, edited by me and Paul A. Soukup (Hampton P, 2012, pages 117-141). (Smith did field work among the Chipewyan in western Canada and published numerous essays about their oral-traditional stories in publications in anthropology.)

The sense of participation that Smith calls attention to in Chipewyan oral-traditional stories is not necessarily incompatible with Lavelle's philosophy of participation.

More generally, Jean Houston of the Human Potential Movement calls attention to the sense of participation in her book *Lifeorce: The Psycho-Historical Recovery of the Self* (Delacorte P, 1980). Incidentally, in the 1970s, she read the lengthy version of my essay "IQ, Orality, and Literacy."

Unfortunately, A. N. Williams does not happen to mention Lavelle's work with the aural-visual contrast or Ong's or McLuhan's in her exploratory book *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge UP, 2007), even though the sense of participation in God is one theme in her book (see the index for specific page references).

For further studies on participation in God in the Christian tradition of thought, see the following four books: (1) Norman Russell's *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford UP, 2004), (2) Williams' *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford UP, 1999), (3) Bernhard Blankenhorn's *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert The Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Catholic U of America P, 2015), and (4) Daria Spezzano's *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Sapientia P of Ave Maria U, 2015).

To avoid a certain misunderstanding, I want to point out here that spirituality aimed at mystic participation can basically be secular in spirit (i.e., not explicitly religious), as Troels Engberg-Pedersen explains in his book *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford UP, 2010). Also see Cushman's book *Therapeia: Plato's Conception of Philosophy* (U of North Carolina P, 1958), mentioned above.

Your guess is as good as mine as to why more of Lavelle's books have never been translated into English. But my guess is that his way of using provisional sentences ("If it is true that X is Y, then . . .") makes for somewhat lengthy and roundabout sentences that are not always easy to follow. In short, Lavelle is not the Hemingway of philosophy. (But Mortimer J. Adler is the Hemingway of philosophy – and a prolific author of numerous accessible books in philosophy.)

Now, Ong's creative use in his 1958 book of Lavelle's aural-visual contrast in cognitive development prompted Ong's Canadian friend Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) also to use the aural-visual contrast with his own examples in his racy experimental (and flawed) book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (U of Toronto P, 1962).

As McLuhan's biographer Philip Marchand points out, McLuhan in his 1962 book borrowed Ong's aural-visual thesis in his 1958 book about Western culture. But of course McLuhan supplied his own supporting material and commentary. So if imitation is the highest form of flattery, McLuhan was in effect flattering Ong. For his part, Ong responded favorably to McLuhan's 1962 book and helped promote it.

In two of McLuhan's early articles, he expresses his interest in mystic participation: (1) "G. K. Chesterton: A Practical Mystic" in the *Dalhousie Review*, volume 15 (January 1936): pages 455-464; and (2) "The Analogical Mirrors" in the *Kenyon Review* (1944), which is about the posthumously published (in 1918) poetry of the Victorian Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889). (Both Chesterton and Hopkins were Roman Catholic converts, as was McLuhan.)

McLuhan's 1962 experimental book and his 1964 conventional book *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man* prompted the fashionable journalist and social satirist Tom Wolfe to write and publish an influential essay about McLuhan ("What If He's Right?") that helped catapult the Canadian, himself a social satirist in his commentary in his first experimental book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (1951), to extraordinary fame in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Wolfe earned his Ph.D. in American studies at Yale University, where McLuhan's friend Cleanth Brooks was a significant faculty member. Wolfe probably heard about McLuhan from Brooks. Brooks and Robert Penn Warren had published the widely used textbook *Understanding Poetry*. McLuhan paid tribute to their book title by titling his 1964 book *Understanding Media*.

Even though Ong had his proverbial 15 minutes of fame, he did not become as famous as McLuhan. McLuhan became a celebrity. Like Ong, McLuhan was an English teacher and Renaissance specialist. However, despite the fame that each achieved, neither had much impact on literary studies. But both were part of the intellectual ferment of the 1960s and 1970s.

In the book *HILLARY'S CHOICE* (Random House, 1999, pages 48-49 and 66), Gail Sheehy reports that young Hillary Rodham (born in 1947) read Ong's book *In the Human Grain: Further Explorations of Contemporary Culture* (Macmillan, 1967) in the summer of 1967 and was deeply impressed with it. (Ong's earlier explorations of contemporary culture appear in his book *The Barbarian within: And Other Fugitive Essays and Studies* [Macmillan, 1962], which I first read in the fall of 1964, when I was 20 years old.)

When I took Ong's course Practical Criticism: Prose in the spring semester of 1966 at SLU, he assigned McLuhan's book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) by putting it on the reserved reading list in the library for the course. Ong described it as racy, and he told us to read it with a grain of salt. "Racy" strikes me as an apt and accurate descriptor of McLuhan's 1962, and Ong's advice to read it with a grain of salt strikes me as good advice not only for reading McLuhan's 1962 book but also for reading most of his publications. In his 1951 book, mentioned above, McLuhan was overtly a social satirist. In many of his later publications, the spirit of the social satirist also emerges.

In 1966-1967, Ong served as the Berg Professor in English at New York University (NYU), and in 1967-1968, McLuhan was a visiting professor at Fordham University, the Jesuit university in the Bronx. Ong had received his Ph.D. in English from Harvard University in 1955, and Harvard University Press published his doctoral dissertation, slightly revised, in two volumes in 1958. McLuhan had received his Ph.D. in English from Cambridge University in 1944, but he did not revise his doctoral dissertation for publication in his lifetime. (But it was published, unrevised, posthumously.)

However, in the *New York Review of Books* dated March 14, 1968, pages 22-26, the stodgy British literary critic and WASP watch dog Frank Kermode a critique of both Ong and McLuhan in his review essay about Ong's other 1967 book, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale UP, 1967), the expanded version of Ong's 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale's Divinity School.

Kermode also served as the editor of the book series on Modern Masters, in which he published the stodgy Jonathan Miller's sharply critical book titled *Marshall McLuhan* (1971). In fairness, not all of Miller's sharp criticisms of McLuhan are unfair. But Miller is definitely rather slow on the uptake.

At a certain time, Neil Postman and a few colleagues at NYU started the media ecology doctoral program there, which was far more strongly oriented toward McLuhan's thought experiments than toward Ong's. But some of Ong's publications were included in the program's mix of readings.

A number of graduates of the NYU doctoral program in media ecology subsequently found tenure-track positions in communications studies at Fordham. Graduates of the NYU media ecology program also founded the professional organization known as the Media Ecology Association, which sponsors the journal *EME: Explorations in Media Ecology* (in which I have published articles and a book review). In addition, Lance Strate, a graduate of the NYU program

and a faculty member at Fordham, served as the supervisory editor of the Media Ecology book series that was published for many years by Hampton Press (in which I published three books and contributed to a fourth).

In my UMD course on Literacy, Technology and Society (COMP 1506; now WRIT 1506), I used two of Postman's books – in addition to Ong's book *Orality and Literacy* and a number of novels. For further information about that course, see the drop-down menu for Courses at my UMD homepage: <http://www.d.umn.edu/~tfarrell>.

Now, because Lazere also discusses E. D. Hirsch's work regarding cultural literacy extensively (see the index for specific page references), I would point out that Ong's widely cited 1975 PMLA article "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction" can be used to support and strengthen Hirsch's argument about necessary cultural literacy. (Most of my publications in the 1970s and 1980s centered on educational theory and the possible actuation of cognitive potentialities.)

Ong served as the president of MLA in 1978 – to this day, he is the only Roman Catholic priest ever elected president of MLA. So he deserves some credit for calling the issue of literacy to the attention of academics in literary studies. At least four of Ong's books can be categorized as aimed at academics in literary studies: (1) *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Cornell UP, 1971), (2) *Interfaces of the Word: studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Cornell UP, 1977), (3) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Methuen, 1982), and (4) *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (U of Toronto P, 1986).

But Ong's book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale UP, 1967) is his sweeping extrapolation and development of the phenomenological and personalist (existentialist) philosophical themes he developed in his 1958 book.

Ong further developed his understanding of the psychodynamics he had studied in his 1958 book, in his perceptive book *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (Cornell UP, 1981), the published version of his 1979 Messenger Lectures at Cornell University.

The agonistic (contesting) psychodynamics that Ong discusses in his 1981 book involve the part of the human psyche that Plato and Aristotle refer to as "thumos" (or "thymos"). Plato and Aristotle see the virtue of courage as the virtue to be cultivated in connection with the part of the human psyche. For Plato and Aristotle, the virtue of courage is defined as the mean between the extremes of brashness and pusillanimity.

For all practical purposes, assertiveness training has in effect rediscovered the wheel. By definition, assertiveness is the mean between the extremes of non-assertiveness (also known as passive) and overly assertiveness (also known as hostile).

Was I perhaps being brash by publishing my controversial 1983 IQ article? It didn't seem to me at the time that I was being brash, and it still doesn't seem that way to me, even though I now regret that I was not familiar at the time with Simpkins' reading research.

But am I perhaps being brash by publishing "The Unexpurgated Text of 'IQ, Orality, and Literacy'" in UMD d-Commons? It doesn't seem that way to me. But perhaps it may be. We'll see.

For further discussion of "thumos," see the new Afterword to the revised edition of my book *Walter Ong's Contributions to Cultural Studies: The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication* (Hampton P, 2015, pages 197-205, esp. 201-203).

In any event, the 1960s and 1970s also included the rise of the so-called New Left. Lazere describes himself as an unreconstructed New Leftist. Unreconstructed and reconstructed New Leftists, and younger academic leftists who are too young to have been part of the New Left that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, tend to be over-represented at prestigious American universities. No doubt Lazere's new book is aimed at academic leftists at prestigious American universities.

As Lazere understands (see pages 231, 240, and 265), the New Left was deeply indebted to the critiques of Erich Fromm, whose work was in turn deeply indebted to the work of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. However, Fromm's book *To Have or to Be* (1976) is not essentially incompatible with Lavelle's or Ong's existentialist philosophical thought – or with Pope Francis' critique of consumerism in his recent eco-encyclical.

But Ong's view of Marx is not well informed, but Fromm's view of Marx is well informed. Also see Fromm's book *Marx's Concept of Man*, with a translation by T. B. Bottomore of certain manuscripts by Marx (1961).

For an informed critical assessment of Fromm, see Lawrence J. Friedman's book *The Lives of Erich Fromm: Love's Prophet* (Columbia UP, 2013). Disclosure: Dr. Fromm spoke at SLU on Sunday, April 25, 1965, and I attended the sit-down dinner and reception to honor him and his wife before his evening presentation.

In my estimate, Ong's mature work is a treasure that is open to further creative development beyond Ong's own creative development of his own perceptive thought. Thus far, however, Ong's mature thought has not had much influence in the prestige culture in academia and beyond academia, except for McLuhan's racy experimental (and flawed) book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), mentioned above.

Now, your guess is as good as mine as to whether or not Lazere's discussion of my controversial 1983 IQ article in his deeply polemical new book will re-ignite the heated controversy over my article. The controversy produced far more heat than light – heat that I understandably did not appreciate. But I have learned a lot from suffering that heat. As President Harry Truman's quip about the heat in the kitchen intimated, it is hard to embrace the heat of controversy. So I would not be thrilled to see the heated controversy re-ignited by Lazere's new book.

Nevertheless, I would still like to see my environmental hypothesis suitably tested through longitudinal studies using an experimental research design over a number of years involving Simpkins' approach to elementary reading instruction. (I regret that I did not know about Simpkins' research when I was working on my IQ essay in the 1970s and 1980s.)

In my estimate, my IQ article is over Lazere's head, as it was over the heads of my most hostile critics. For my most hostile critics, but not necessarily for Lazere, I made the egregious mistake of seeming to intimate that I may know a wee bit more than they do about the matters I discuss in my IQ article. As a result, my most hostile critics erupted in a show of hostility. How dare I suggest an environmental hypothesis should be tested when they have already precluded any further discussion of IQ differences as supposedly "racist"?

In any event, to understand my article well enough to assess the plausibility of the testable environmental hypothesis that I present would require Lazere and other would-be critics to study Ong's work in depth -- and the related scholarly work that he draws on in his work, including Eric A. Havelock's breakthrough books *Preface to Plato* (1963) and *The Greek Concept of Justice* (1978), and Arthur R. Jensen's IQ research. Between 1983 and 2015, Lazere had more than sufficient time to study not only Ong and Havelock but also Jensen's IQ research. Incidentally, I took graduate courses in research and statistics in social science research, including educational research, which is why I felt qualified to read Jensen's research and discuss Level I and Level II in cognitive development, based on his delineation of them. But Lazere did not undertake to thoroughly study Ong, Havelock, and Jensen. But arguably it might be expecting too much of Lazere that he would undertake to study Jensen's IQ research.

In the spirit of giving credit where credit is due, I should give credit to certain people in composition and rhetoric who did undertake to study Ong's work carefully: the late Robert J. Connors, the late Edward P. J. Corbett, Richard Leo Enos, Janice M. Lauer, James C. McDonald, Patricia A. Sullivan, Kathleen E. Welch, and Betty R. Youngkin -- and perhaps others.

But the 1960s and 1970s also gave rise to the extremely influential anti-60s rhetoric of movement conservatism, as Philip Jenkins shows in his book *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (Oxford UP, 2006).

So will Lazere's new book influence the balance of power in our contemporary culture wars between academic and non-academic leftists and their allies, on the one hand, and, on the other, movement conservatism?

On the one hand, many leftists tend to demonize both people and views they don't like, as they demonized me and my environmental hypothesis about IQ as supposedly "racist" even though it explicitly counter the possible biological explanation of IQ. Conversely, leftists tend to come out in favor of certain selected authors and/or views -- a tendency they share with conservative taste-makers. From Lazere's choices of past controversies to critique, it appears that he wants to re-litigate those controversies in the court of public opinion among academic leftists and their academic allies.

No doubt Lazere's views about those various controversies would have been far more timely ("kairos" is the ancient rhetorical term for timely) to express at the different times of the different controversies than they are today. So is his deeply polemical new book too little too late? Or is his new book perhaps going to establish its own timeliness? Is this now the right time for Lazere to strike out against academic leftists and their allies?

Figuratively speaking, Lazere's deeply polemical discussions of those past controversies make Lazere appear to be Odysseus slaughtering the suitors – academic leftists and their allies – getting stuff off his chest and perhaps settling certain old scores. But how will contemporary academic leftists and their allies respond to Lazere's re-litigating those past controversies involving academic leftists and their allies?

Figuratively speaking, Lazere's deeply polemical book also aims to work as an exorcism on academic leftists and their allies – an exorcism many conservatives would love to see happen. But who is going to perform an exorcism on contemporary conservatives, eh?

On the other hand, many movement conservatives also tend to demonize everything they consider to be contrary to the spirit of their anti-60s rhetoric. So any shift in the balance of power between these two fervent groups might be an improvement. But it is not likely that very many conservatives, if any, will read Lazere's new book.

The spirit of the conservatives' anti-60s rhetoric can work against Ong and McLuhan and their works because they were part of the intellectual ferment of the 1960s. But, on the one hand, academic leftists such as Lazere and non-academic leftists such as journalists, and, on the other hand, conservatives have not risen to Ong's plane of consciousness.

But are any academic leftists at prestigious American universities likely to read Lazere's deeply polemical book and enter constructively into debate with him and his views – instead of just demonizing him and his views? We'll see.

Will Lazere's discussion of my controversial 1983 IQ article re-ignite the heated controversy about it among academic leftists and certain other academics? We'll see.

By publishing "The Unexpurgated Text of 'IQ, Orality, and Literacy'" in UMD d-Commons, I may be waving a red flag in front a bull, figuratively speaking – academic leftists and certain other academics. Perhaps I am. We'll see.

As I say, Ong's mature work challenges us to rise to a new plane of consciousness. But Lazere and other leftists have not yet risen to that new plane of consciousness – nor have conservatives, or very many other people.

Ong's three books published by Cornell University Press (1971, 1977, and 1981) sold so well that Ong ranks as one of the best-selling authors ever published by Cornell University Press. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary in 2012 of Ong's birth in 1912, Cornell University Press made all three of Ong's books available through its print-on-demand service.

After Ong died in 2003, the University of Chicago Press reissued his massively researched book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* (orig. ed., 1958) in paperback with a new foreword by Adrian Johns of the University of Chicago.

The copy on the back cover of the 2004 edition includes the following statements: “A canonical text for enthusiasts of media, Renaissance literature, and intellectual history, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* is an elegant review of the history of Ramist scholarship and his quarrels with Aristotle. A key influence on Marshall McLuhan, with whom Ong enjoys the status of honorary guru among technophiles, this challenging study remains the most detailed account of Ramus’s method ever published.”

I would draw your attention to the word “enthusiasts” in this quotation. That characterization does not sound exactly positive.

But why isn’t Ong’s book also said to be a canonical text for enthusiasts of print culture and book history such as Johns?

I’d say that Ong’s book is not a canonical text for stodgy people. But it is a canonical text for intelligent people.

But Ong’s intelligent and creative use in his 1958 book of the aural-visual contrast that he borrowed from Lavelle is a tough act to follow. In his mature work Ong was a deeply original thinker. Such deep creativity is uncommon.

Moreover, neither Ong nor McLuhan is an uncritical technophile. But technophiles typically are uncritical enthusiasts of technology and technological developments. As a matter of fact, McLuhan tends toward being as technophobe, as does Postman. But Ong is definitely not a technophobe, but he is decidedly techno-friendly.

But I would say that Ong’s 1958 book is indeed a challenging study because of Ong’s plane of consciousness in constructing it – the plane of consciousness that Ong himself had come to experience as the result of studying Lavelle’s 1942 book.

Finally, I want to paraphrase the question that Wolfe poses in the title of his influential essay about McLuhan: What if Lavelle and Ong and McLuhan and I are right about the aural-visual contrast in cognitive processing?

In the final analysis, my testable environmental hypothesis about IQ comes down to the aural-visual contrast in cognitive processing.

But let’s consider the question Wolfe poses in the title of his influential essay from another angle. If Lavelle, Ong, McLuhan, and I are right about the aural-visual contrast in cognitive processing, then why would Kermode and Miller and my most hostile critics resist this insight with such shows of hostility? In other words, is the insight about the aural-visual contrast in cognitive processing somehow felt to be threatening? If it is, what exactly is supposedly being threatened?

No doubt to grasp Lavelle's insight about aural-visual cognitive processing, as Ong does, calls for an extraordinary inward turn of consciousness as well as detachment from one's cultural conditioning.

But make no mistake about it, the stakes are high. School districts across the country have wasted millions of dollars what have proven to be futile efforts to improve the school performance of students from highly oral cultural backgrounds.

For example, in the new book *The Prize: Who's in Charge of America's Schools?* (2015), journalist Dale Russakoff details the sad story of ambitious educational reforms in Newark, New Jersey. In effect, Newark has provided another model of what kinds of things do not work – not a model for other cities to follow.

I stated the basic import of what I have learned as the result of the heat of the controversy over my 1983 IQ article in my op-ed titled “An Open Letter to the Honorable Jerry Brown, Governor of California” that I published at OpEdNews.com on September 20, 2015. Briefly, I called on Governor Brown, who has also served as mayor of Oakland, California, to help set up a national showcase multi-year reading program in the public schools in Oakland using Simpkins' approach to elementary reading instruction.

John Rickford, an African American linguist at nearby Stanford University, is familiar with Simpkins' approach to elementary reading instruction. (Michael D. Linn in linguistics at UMD called my attention to Rickford's work.)

No doubt the Oakland school district would need additional funds for training the elementary school teachers in Simpkins' approach to elementary reading instruction. Perhaps the additional funding could be provided by foundations and/or private sources.

Compared to all the razzle-dazzle involved in the Newark school reforms, my proposal for establishing a national showcase reading-instruction program in the Oakland elementary schools may sound too simple to be true.

Now, after Jean Houston read the lengthy version of my essay “IQ, Orality, and Literacy” in the 1970s, she sent me a copy of her 1972 book (with her spouse Robert Masters) with the following inscription:

“For Tom Farrell/ A Magister Ludi/ if ever there was one/ Jean Houston”

Her words are an allusion to the honorific title used in Hermann Hesse's novel *The Glass Bead Game* (1969; orig. German ed., 1943).

But as an allusion to that honorific title, her words are flattery worthy of young Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*, or of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, as Jean Houston herself might say. (She discusses Nausicaa in her book *The Hero and the Goddess: The Odyssey as Mystery and Initiation* [1992].)

For bibliographic information about Ong's 400 or so publications, including information about reprintings, see the late Thomas M. Walsh's "Walter J. Ong, S.J.: A Bibliography 1929-2006" in the book *Language, Culture, and Identity: The Legacy of Walter J. Ong, S.J.*, edited by Sara van den Berg and Walsh (Hampton P, 2011, pages 185-245).

Other English publications about Lavelle include Jean Lacroix's 1952 French article "A Philosopher of Acceptance: Louis Lavelle," translated by Illyd Trethowan in the *Downside Review* (Autumn 1953): pages 372-386; and Colin Smith's chapter about Lavelle and Sartre in his book *Contemporary French Philosophy: A Study in Norms and Values* (London: Methuen, 1964, pages 47-74).